

there such a disproportionate allocation of earmarks? Why are so many going to leadership or so-called vulnerable Members on one side.

Why are earmarks given out to Members who are at risk of losing their election? According to a Roll Call article just a few days ago, it said that "Sixteen Democrats in the 'Frontline' program, aimed at protecting the 29 most vulnerable House Democrats, secured \$810,000 worth of earmarks each" in the Labor-HHS bill. This is not a one-sided effort. It's not just the Democrats, it's my party as well.

The article went on to say, "Among the 23 Republican incumbents participating in the 'Regain Our Majority Program' this cycle, 14 secured \$900,000 or more in the Labor-HHS bill.

"Twelve of those—the Republicans pulled down \$1 million or more in the CJS bill, with 8 of them securing \$1.5 million each."

Again, why is it, after we hear all this lofty rhetoric about earmarks, because we know our constituents best, why is it that the only ones that really know their constituents best are those who are at risk of not being re-elected back to this body? It simply doesn't make sense. It cheapens this institution. We are a better institution than that, and we should, we should respect this institution more than that and respect taxpayers' money more than that.

Also, another reason that's often given for earmarks is that we need to provide oversight. Earmarking is a way to provide oversight, because, after all, we know better than those bureaucrats on how to spend money.

I asked the Congressional Research Service to do a little research to see where the actual oversight in Congress has gone since the contemporary practice of earmarking has really started in the mid-1990s. If you look at the 104th Congress, we just had—not very many earmarks. By the time we got to the 109th Congress, we were up around, I think, the final numbers were about 15,000 earmarks. Yet the oversight hearings actually go down. That's not a legitimate reason for earmarking.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. DEFAZIO) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DEFAZIO addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BURGESS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURGESS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

HONORING HOWARD COBLE FOR BEING THE LONGEST-SERVING NORTH CAROLINA REPUBLICAN IN U.S. HOUSE HISTORY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Ms. FOXX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Speaker, today is a special day in the history of North Carolina, this Congress, and especially in the life of public service led by Congressman HOWARD COBLE from North Carolina's Sixth Congressional District.

Today, Congressman COBLE becomes the longest-serving Republican from North Carolina in the history of the House of Representatives. His nearly 24 years of congressional service eclipses the record of service previously held by Jim Broyhill, who served from 1963 to 1986.

HOWARD has a sterling reputation as a man of integrity and principle, a representative who stands for what is right and who fights on behalf of what makes America a great Nation. He is a truly independent voice for North Carolina and Washington. I consider it a profound honor to call HOWARD a dear friend, and I always look forward to working with him in Congress on behalf of the people of North Carolina.

In addition to his unimpeachable character, HOWARD COBLE is a champion for his constituents, whether he is working in Washington or back in North Carolina. He is passionate about constituent service, and he never backs down from a challenge to do what makes sense for those he represents in North Carolina's Sixth District.

His North Carolina values of hard work, common sense and sacrifice, on behalf of those he serves, have made HOWARD not just the longest-serving Republican from North Carolina but also a tremendously effective legislator.

The dean of the North Carolina delegation is also in possession of one of the sharpest wits in Congress. He is renowned for his deadpan humor and loves a good joke, even if it's at his own expense. As I am sure his constituents are aware, HOWARD is always ready with a cheerful greeting and a welcoming smile for whoever crosses his path.

In fact, many of those who meet HOWARD for the first time will quickly realize his affection for his constituents in his district. He can hardly meet a constituent without inquiring about their high school alma mater and then rattling off their high school's mascot.

It's not just that HOWARD knows the high school mascot of every high school in his district, it's that he cares about the little details that mean so much to average North Carolinians. Perhaps the most fitting summary of HOWARD's personality is that he is the essence of what it means to be a southern gentleman, someone who simply exudes kindness, charm and compassion.

Of course, HOWARD's sharp wit can be a two-edged sword. Last month his sense of humor almost killed someone. At the North Carolina GOP convention, he cracked a joke to Senator Robert Pittenger, who is campaigning to become North Carolina's lieutenant governor. Pittenger nearly expired after choking on his meal in mid-chuckle. Reliable sources have hinted that the joke might have been a variation of HOWARD's feisty mountain woman one-liner that he routinely uses to describe me. Fortunately, former presidential candidate Mike Huckabee was there to rescue Pittenger from HOWARD's humor with a well-placed Heimlich maneuver.

All kidding aside, one thing I admire most about Congressman COBLE is the fact he has served so long and so admirably while still retaining the North Carolina values that helped bring him to Congress 24 years ago. He has no doubt seen much during his tenure from the last days of the Soviet Union and the fall of the Berlin Wall, to the heady days of the implementation of the GOP's Contract with America in 1995, and then the dark days after September 11. Throughout it all, Congressman COBLE has been a consistent, caring legislator who represents the very best of our great State of North Carolina.

Today, I salute HOWARD COBLE, my friend, for his many years of service. On this historic day, I wish him many more years of faithfully serving his constituents and his country.

HOWARD is truly one of a kind.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. CAMPBELL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CAMPBELL of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Kansas (Mr. MORAN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. MORAN of Kansas addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. GARRETT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. WOLF) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WOLF addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)